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Lucia A Keegan 01/29/2007 10:42:26 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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UNCLAS PARIS 00321

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INFO: AMBO DCM SCI POL ECON AMBU AMB

DISSEMINATION: UNESCOX  
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APPROVED: AMB: LVOLIVER  
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SIPDIS

FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS

FOR IO - JIM DUFTY  
FOR S/WE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [UNESCO](#) [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: UNESCO: SEEKING NAMES OF INFLUENTIAL WOMEN

REF A: 06 STATE 202341, REF B: 06 Paris 1344

11. Summary: Ref A calls for posts to supply the names of influential women to be included in a roster of women leaders worldwide. We at the U.S. Mission believe that UNESCO can act as an effective multiplier on global issues, including those involving women's empowerment. End Summary.

12. At present, there are approximately 37 female ambassadors accredited to UNESCO. A recently published book "Sixty years of Women at UNESCO" describes the important contribution that female ambassadors and secretariat members have made to the organization. Many of the women currently serving as ambassadors to UNESCO have played prominent roles in their home countries. For example, the Ambassador of Spain to UNESCO, Maria Jesus San Segundo, is a former minister of Education and Science.

13. The Ambassador of Mauritius -- herself a former Minister for Women, Family Welfare, and Child Development -- recently invited Ambassador Oliver to help establish a "Group/Network of Women Ambassadors for UNESCO." The goal is to assist UNESCO to "enhance its actions in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment." This group, which will remain an informal caucus for now, met in December for a second time to discuss specific priorities. Participants included Australia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Ivory Coast, Lithuania, and Spain. Many present voiced support for programs promoting peace education for women, with many noting that women have a special role to play in educating the younger generation. Guatemala observed that peace education is a building block for democracy. The group of female UNESCO ambassadors now plan a launch event in conjunction with the UNESCO March 8 (International Women's Day) roundtable on "Women as Peacemakers."

15. On January 25, Ambassador Oliver organized a dinner at her residence attended by women ambassadors from Spain, Mauritius, South

Africa, Sri Lanka, Poland, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Morocco, Lebanon, and Gabon. The dinner -- which lasted five hours, fueled by the group's enthusiasm -- focused on means of working as an informal caucus to promote goals including peace education. Participants evoked a variety of potential projects. South Africa proposed that the ambassadors provide support for a girl's school in Liberia; the Liberian President was guest of honor at UNESCO's 2005 event marking International Women's Day. Another idea was to establish an "Ambassadors' Prize" to be awarded to winners of an annual essay competition for girl students. The Ambassadors all expressed the readiness to serve as role models for girls and young women. In their efforts, the UNESCO secretariat would play an important support role, the Ambassadors agreed.

¶6. This theme of "Women as Peacemakers" could perhaps be expanded to include democracy building and counter-terrorism education, key transformational democracy themes, key priorities of this Mission (Ref B). If the State Department organizes "follow-on strategy sessions for Women's empowerment with government and civil society" on this or other issues, it should consider engaging UNESCO. Not only might the U.S. Mission help in recruiting appropriate participants for events, but the UNESCO secretariat might be able to provide expertise and networking assistance.

¶7. UNESCO has experience in several areas relating to women's empowerment. First Lady Laura Bush is a UNESCO Honorary Ambassador for Literacy, supporting educational programs including those that promote women and girls' education. UNESCO has also launched several programs to enhance the role of women in science, as well as in media and communications. And, with an eye to popular appeal, UNESCO is concluding an agreement with the WTA to encourage women as leaders in sport. Three tennis players, including Venus Williams, will promote gender equality.  
Oliver